

FOCUS

VISTA PSYCHOLOGICAL & COUNSELING CENTRE

FALL 2012

Letting Go: Tips for Parents of New College Students

After 18 years of parenting, it can be hard to let go. Here is a sneak peek at the challenges of the transition ahead and advice to prepare right now.

The Emotional Roller Coaster

Recognize this is a time of ambivalence for all parents. The excitement and joy about opportunities awaiting your child are mixed with waves of nostalgia and a sense of loss. Talk with other parents who are going through the same thing.

Recognize your child's conflicting emotions. Your child, like you, is being pulled between past, present and future...one day exclaiming "leave me alone; I'm 18 years old. I'm independent" and the next complaining "you're never around when I need you." your child's ups and downs are a sign of the ambivalence of this transitional time.

Take comfort in the knowledge that part of you is going with your child. The foundation you have provided over the past 18 years will accompany your child across the miles and throughout the years.

Don't tell your child, "These are the best years of your life." No one is

happy all the time between the ages of 18 and 22, and when a student is homesick or overtired from studying all night, it's not reassuring to have parents imply that this is as good as it gets!

Enjoy this time for celebration. Try not to focus so much on the upcoming departure that you might miss the full impact of the senior year festivities and the joy of summer days ahead.

The Summer Before

Be prepared to see less of your child this summer. The closer it gets to departure time, the less you can expect to see of your child. He will likely be spending every waking hour with friends. Allow them this special time together.

Make a financial plan and discuss expectations with your child.

Develop a tentative budget and be clear about who will pay for what. For example, some parents pay for books and supplies, while their child is responsible for incidental expenses such as snack, movies, CDs. Other students are responsible for earning a percentage of their tuition. Teach your child about responsible use of credit and debit cards.

Discuss academic goals and expectations ahead of time.

Remember, many freshmen do not do as well academically first semester as they did in high school, and many change their minds about their proposed course of study. Ask them what they hope to accomplish academically during their first year. It is important for them to take ownership of their education. Grades are not the only indication of learning.

Communication: Keeping in Touch.

Talk to your child about how you'll keep in touch. Do you want a planned time to talk or do you want to be more spontaneous? A cell phone can be a wonderful way to keep in touch, or it can be, as one student described, an "electronic leash." Encourage your child to use it with discretion and not just to fill in the spaces. Email, instant messaging, and texting are also wonderful ways to keep in touch. Just don't count on a reply to every message.

Be a coach rather than trying to solve your child's problems yourself. You're likely to hear more than your share of problems. College students usually call their parents

Inside this issue:

Happiness-Health Connection 3

Shoes: A Window Into Your Personality 3

The Paradox of Forgiveness: Growing Toward Peace 4

Letting Go: Tips for Parents... (continued)

As they journey toward adulthood and independence, sometimes they want your advice and sometimes they just want you to listen.



for reassurance when things aren't going well, and call their friends with the latest exciting news. When you get those late night phone calls, and you will, you can encourage your child to use the appropriate campus resources—to go to the health service or career center, to talk to an advisor, dean, a counselor or tutor. Read resource information sent to you by the college so you can be an informed coach for your child.

Be an anchor.

Keep your child informed about changes at home. College students want their parents to accept all the changes they are making but want everything at home to stay the same. So it's important to keep them informed about changes at home, whether it's moving a younger sibling into their room, or, on a more serious note, about illness in the family or the death of a pet. They need this from you in order to feel secure and maintain a sense of trust.

Acknowledge that college is different.

Although century-old buildings look untouched by time, college life today is very different from the campus scene 25 or 30 years ago. For those of you, who went to college think twice before beginning a sentence with, "When I was in college..."

Ask about courses, rather than focusing on grades.

Invite your child to share with you the discovery of new ideas, academic interests and intellectual passions.

Send care packages.

Early in the year, sharing popcorn or chocolate chip cookies is a wonderful way for a student to meet floor mates. Photographs are personal reminders of home. Holiday decorations, baskets of treats at exam time, and even everyday necessities like shampoo and quarters for the washing machine are reminders that say, "I'm thinking of you."

When Students Come Back Home

Renegotiate expectations.

Your child has been making decisions on how she will spend her time for many months. You, however, may have strong feelings of your own when she comes in late at night, sleeps late in the morning or arrives late for dinner. Most students respond well if parents treat them with respect. For example, a parent might say, "I know you're used to being out until all hours of the night at school, but I can't sleep when I wake up at 2 in the morning and you're not here. Let's talk about how we're going to handle this so we'll both feel good about it." It takes flexibility and communication to find a common ground.

Understand that the college years are a time for exploration.

Your son or daughter may come home with a "new look," someone else's clothes, new politics, philosophies or eating habits. Most of these changes are not permanent. Take a step back,

have a sense of humor, and pick your battles.

Don't over schedule.

Tell your child ahead of time about family plans, especially over the holidays, so that he or she can make plans accordingly.

Throughout the College Years

Expect change.

Students will change the way they think and way they look. Many will change their majors and career goals. They need you to stick with them, have patience when they are uncertain and support them as they chart the course of their own lives.

College students care more about what you think than they are likely to let you know.

They quote you, talk about you and look to you for encouragement. As they journey toward adulthood and independence, sometimes they want your advice and sometimes they just want you to listen. And as one of them put it, "We just won't tell you which time is which."

Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger are co-authors of Letting Go: A Parents Guide to Understanding the College Years.

Coburn is the assistant vice chancellor for students and associate dean for freshman transition at Washington University. Treeger, a long-time member of the Washington University Counseling Service, is now a psychotherapist in private practice.

Happiness-Health Connection

Want to feel better and improve your health? Start by focusing on the things that bring you happiness. Scientific evidence suggests that positive emotions can help make life longer and healthier. For decades, the influential researcher, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explored people's satisfaction in their every day activities. He found that people reported the greatest satisfaction when they are totally immersed in and concentrating on what they are doing. He dubbed this state of intense absorption "flow."

How do you know if you're in the flow?

- **You lose awareness of time.**

You aren't watching the clock, and hours pass like minutes. As filmmaker

George Lucas puts it, talent is "a combination of something you love a great deal and something you can lose yourself in—something the you can start at 9 o'clock, look up from your work and it's 10 o'clock at night.

- **You aren't thinking about yourself.**

You aren't focused on your comfort, and you aren't wondering how you look or how your actions will be perceived by others. Your awareness of yourself is only in relation to the activity itself, such as your fingers on a piano keyboard, or the way you position a knife to cut vegetables, or the balance of your body parts as you ski or surf.

- **You aren't interrupted by extraneous thoughts.**

You aren't thinking about such mundane matters as your shopping list or what to wear tomorrow.

- **You are active.**

Flow activities aren't passive, and you have some control over what you are doing.

- **You work effortlessly.**

Flow activities require effort (usually more effort than involved in typical daily experience). Although you may be working harder than usual, at flow moments everything is "clicking" and feels almost effortless.

Harvard Medical School
HEALTHbeat Extra: The happiness-health connection. April 17, 2012

People reported greatest satisfaction when they are totally immersed in and concentrating on what they are doing.

Shoes: A Window Into Your Personality

In "The Silence of the Lambs," a quick glance at Clarice Starling's "cheap shoes" helped Hannibal Lector psychoanalyze the FBI detective. But how much of your personality is really revealed by your footwear? Surprisingly, researchers from the University of Kansas and Wellesley College say they are the first to study that question empirically. They asked more than 200 students, ranging in age from 18 to 55, to submit photographs of the shoes they wore most often and answer questions about their personalities and other topics. A different group of students then made judgments about the owners, based solely on the photographs. Meanwhile, researchers "coded" the shoes on various objective traits—heel height,

color, degree of wear, pointed-ness, and so on..

Students made good guesses about the owners' age, gender, and family income, which isn't so surprising, but also, remarkably, about their "agreeableness" (one of the so-called Big Five personality traits) and their level of attachment anxiety. Both men and women who wore "high top" shoes (say, boots) were viewed as less agreeable than those who wore low-top footwear, for example. Those diagnoses meshed with students' answers on the personality tests. "Attachment anxiety" refers to the quality of preoccupation with, and insecurity over, one's relationship with other people. People who wore drab, newish shoes were disproport-

tionately—and accurately—perceived as being insecure about their relationships with other people. In contrast, bright, well-worn shoes accurately signaled confidence about relationships. The study also showed that people had intuitions about shoes that were false: The participants tended to think that people who wore brightly colored shoes were extroverts, but there was no such connection.

Article by Christopher Shea of the Wall Street Journal, WSJ Blogs June 22, 2012.

Source: "Shoes As a Source of First Impressions," Omri Gil-lath, Angela J. Bahns, Fiona Ge and Christian S. Crandall, Journal of Research in Personality (forthcoming)



VISTA PSYCHOLOGICAL & COUNSELING CENTRE



1201 South Main Street
Suite 100
North Canton, Ohio 44720

Phone: 330.244.8782
Fax: 330.244.8795
Email: info@vistapcc.com

Visit us on the Web
www.vistapcc.com

Welcome to Vista!

Our FOCUS is on you by offering the very best in psychological and counseling services.

Established in 2008, our staff is committed to helping you achieve greater emotional wellness and adjustment through individual, child and adolescent, couples, family, and group therapy.

We are available to you Monday thru Saturday with day and evening hours for your convenience.

The Paradox of Forgiveness: Growing Toward Peace

Forgiveness. It is a paradox because we are wired to feel anger and hold grudges. Neuropsychologists can tell you that. We are designed to remember injuries. Mother Nature planned us to fight enemies. Yet spiritual authorities call us to forgive. They tell us that when we rise above our natural instincts, we feel great happiness and peace. It is no wonder that Confucius said that holding a grudge is like drinking poison and hoping it kills our enemy. We can understand why the Buddha said resentment is like picking up burning coals with our bare hand to throw at our enemy. We are the ones who are burned. We are forgiven, says Jesus, only when we forgive. In the

Lord's Prayer is the phrase, "forgive us of our trespasses [our sins] as we forgive those who trespass [or, sin] against us." There is no exception. All enemies must be forgiven and prayed for. It is a powerful and perhaps a discouraging paradox. Note that our spiritual authorities suggest it is in our personal best interest to forgive. It makes us better. Jesus says we are reconciled with God when we reconcile with our enemies. That makes us happy, joyful. They teach that forgiveness leads us to our highest destiny. They teach that the end point of forgiveness is peace and happiness. Aristotle taught that the search for happiness is a proper activity, and in the American

Declaration of Independence, pursuing our own happiness is enthroned as a right that any proper government must necessarily ensure. Jefferson and the founding fathers did not give a guide as to what constitutes a search for happiness. They merely asserted that the government ought to stay out of our way so we can pursue happiness unimpeded...without anyone else's help. You will see that is true about forgiveness too. It is a goal pursued within the chambers of your own heart. Johnson, Dr. Lynn (2012-07-05). THE PARADOX OF FORGIVENESS: Growing Toward Peace (Kindle Locations 148-167). Kindle Edition.

